## NEWS FROM ROME.*

THE COLISEUM.—TOMBS IN THE APPIAN WAY.

At Rome there is a good deal going on to interest the architect and the archæologist. The excavations in the Forum at Rome still continue, though slowly. The Republic pulled down some houses that stood much in the way both of the antiquities and the view, but unluckily they cut down the trees which used to mark the line of the Via Sacra, and thus they spoiled one of the most picturesque features of that interesting site. The foundations of the Basilica Julia are cleared out: the ascent of the Via Sacra to the Capitol is quite distinct: the Arch of Titus is thoroughly repaired; and they are now excavating in and around the Basilica of Constantine—that great ruin, formerly familiar to us under another name. The result of all these excavations certainly tends to confirm the suggestions of Chevalier Bunsen, and the German archæologists; and the Forum *of the Emperors* is now cleared of difficulty and confusion; and the *vexatæ questiones* connected with it are at an end. At the Coliseum much is doing in the way of necessary repairs, and certainly just in time, for if they had been delayed much longer, the upper story must have fallen. These works are really very extensive; and when complete, they will not only rescue this magnificent ruin from destruction, but in part will show what the interior once was. I mean that the intention is to place the fragments of the upper range of internal columns in their places; to restore the divisions, and to reinstate some of the seats, so as to give an idea of what the whole of this mighty edifice might have been. The same care is now extended to most of the principal ruins, and the excavations formerly made are well preserved.

I perceive in the papers some notice of the excavations and researches on the old Appian way. That account is in the main correct; but, perhaps, a somewhat more extensive notice may be acceptable. You will recollect that the old Appian way descended the hill from Albano, and went straight across the Campagna to the gate of S. Sebastian, formerly the Porta Appia, immediately within which is the Arch of Drusus. Of this ancient way, the Nuovo Appia only really occupied so much as served to descend the hill at Albano: it then turned aside to the East, and by a good, but somewhat crooked road, entered Rome by the Porta San Giovanni, and the Great Basilica of St. John Lateran. The old road was therefore abandoned, except about three miles at the farthest end. At the Roman extremity, however, it was still kept up by the road passing the ancient Basilica of S. Sebastian, and up the hill to the tomb of Cecilia Metella: soon after this it entered the Campagna, first as a road, then as a track, and finally, it was entirely lost in the turf. Its course, however, was to be seen by the ruins of a line of tombs, in some cases of enormous dimensions. Canina suggested the excavating around these ruins, and though not intending to re-establish the ancient road, still to trace out its course, and to make it carriageable throughout its whole length. He obliged me by allowing me to accompany him on one of his visits of inspection, and by giving me, at the various points of interest, his views and opinions. At that time, the last day in March, he had 220 men at work under a most intelligent staff. The men were paid 2½ pauls per diem, almost a shilling English, and they seemed to work with great spirit and care. Soon after passing the tomb of Cecilia Metella these excavations had begun, and the result, in many cases, was a complete street of tombs, almost as close as houses, with here and there some remarkable monument. The course directed by Canina is this—first, to excavate in and round each mass, whether large or small: every fragment is numbered, and left *in situ*, the earth only being removed into the adjoining fields. These fragments are then carefully examined and matched, and so far as possible built up into the ancient forms; and the inscriptions, bas-reliefs, or sculpture, are replaced and secured by substantial walls. In this way many tombs, of very curious workmanship, and a host of curious inscriptions, have been developed; and in some parts the restorations are so perfect as to give the road a good deal the character of the street of tombs at Pompeii. The material is very often marble, and there is much exquisite detail at times; but the sculpture at present found is not very remarkable, though three or four statues of good workmanship have been sent to the Vatican. At a distance of about four miles from Rome, Canina has restored two or three of these curious tombs, which consist in a circular podium, or retaining wall, with a conical mound of earth, planted with cypresses. Strabo thus describes the ancient appearance of the mausoleum of Augustus, in the Campus Martius; and here this character of restoration is not only "vraisemblable," but most agreeable in the landscape.

Just beyond that great mass of ruins in the Campagna called Roma Vecchia, is that immense circular building, known familiarly as the Casa Rotonda. It was an enormous mass of brickwork and tufa: on the top is a moderate-sized farm-house, and an olive garden, to which a way had been made from the ground raised by the ruins, at the back through the monument. On clearing out the earth round this ruin, nearly all the marble casing has been discovered, and the Comandante means to restore it. There is a rich marble base moulding: the face was cased with marble to some height, probably rusticated: then came a magnificent marble entablature, decorated with shields in the frieze, with a highly decorated cornice of immense blocks of marble, resting on modillions: above this was an attic of small Corinthian pilasters. There was an inscription; and it is somewhat curious, that the only fragment remaining gives the name of the founder of the tomb Cotta, on a large block of marble, beautifully cut, with the letters at least 18 inches high. The general features of this tomb therefore resemble those of Cecilia Metella, but greatly increased in dimensions and in magnificence, particularly of material; as her tomb is cased with travertino, this with marble. Soon after leaving this tomb all traces of the road is lost, and the ruins stood, "'mid the deep silence of the pathless wild." By excavating, however, it is easily followed, as the enormous curbs of the footpaths generally remain, though the paving is usually broken up and carried away.

The excavations are carried on to the eighth mile-stone from Rome, and here the Itineraries speak of a temple to Hercules; and in the turf some shafts of small dimensions were seen still erect. This ruin was somewhat cleared out when we were there, and it disclosed six ancient columns, and part of the wall of the cell *in situ*. They are not very large, perhaps 2 ft. 6 in. in diameter, but in a very good Greek style and Doric. They are of peperino, and much wasted. The capitals had been found, but no traces of the entablature: perhaps the architrave had been wood, for Canina was quite of opinion that this temple was of the earliest time of the Republic. I could not trace any necking, nor did there appear to have been any very evident entasis as in the columns at Paestum. Beyond this point all at present is the turf of the Campagna, though in the distance the line of the road climbing the hill to Albano is distinctly seen. The works, I believe, are now suspended, because the labourers are wanted for the operations of the farmers, but they will be resumed in the winter. Canina will give the results of the most important of these excavations in a work he is about to publish, to be entitled "Gli Edifizj di Roma antica e di sua Campagna."

W. Tite.

* The following are extracts from a letter from Mr. Tite to Mr. Donaldson.

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Artificial Marble.—A quantity of plaster of Paris is soaked in a solution of alum, baked in an oven, and ground to a powder: it is then used as wanted, by being mixed with water similar to plaster: it sets into an exceedingly hard composition, and takes a high polish. It may be mixed with various coloured minerals, or ochres, to represent the various marbles, and is a valuable recipe.—*Mining Journal.*

## ON BREADTH AND REPOSE.*

MODERN DESIGN.

London is becoming full of towers, spires, columns, obelisks, and innumerable other elevations, but I cannot help thinking how much our metropolis would be improved by a few more domes. I would especially wish to see a few domes applied to Gothic architecture, like those at Ancona and Siena, or some large bold polygonal lanterns, like St. Gereon, at Cologne, or Chiaravalle, near Milan. We are become surfeited with broach spires.

And in the church architecture of cities, at least, I would endeavour to make the compositions very broad in outline, and extremely pyramidal. I would make some grand feature right in the centre, and group the minor features round it, trying to make them compose like the centre part of Sta. Maria del Fiore, at Florence.

There is a beautiful but almost unknown work of Bramante at the little ancient city of Todi, in Umbria, a town rich in monuments, Gothic, Classic, and Etruscan. This is a little church on a most simple and beautiful plan,—a square, surrounded by four apsides, and a dome springing from the centre. This is one of Bramante's last works: in fact, he did not live to finish it; and some of the detail, therefore, is not quite satisfactory. Now, this is or *was*, before the present hideous sacristy was added, perfectly uniform, and I defy all the modern professors of higgledy-piggledy to produce anything more thoroughly picturesque.

It would be a task very difficult at present, but one which I hope may be done in time, to overcome existing prejudices with respect to church arrangement, notwithstanding it is extremely inconvenient for seeing and hearing, deficient in effect, as compared with what it might be, and not in the spirit either of the Church of England or its rubrics.

Of all the forms of plan with which I am acquainted, there is none which so offends to my eye against all the principles of breadth and repose as the Latin cross: to make a thing half uniform and half higgledy-piggledy, equal short arms and unequal long ones, is a fundamental piece of bad taste, which can only be appreciated by drawing out in perspective, or constructing on a model, a church on a Greek Cross plan, and comparing it with the Latin Cross. Now the Basilica form is grand and broad, I admit, *inside*, but I cannot admit that a small barn stuck at the end of a large one is worthy of the nineteenth century. Noble structures have been built of these forms, I confess, but it is only two of the myriads of instances that might be quoted of how the mediæval builders overcame every difficulty of form by their masterly treatment.

"The chancels," says the Church of England rubric, "shall remain as in times past," but it does not say "build new ones." The compilers of our English ritual never dreamt of building new churches. It was unnecessary: the piety of their predecessors had left them enough and to spare. The question was only what to do with these as they existed, and from the very insertion of such an order, it must be evident that their destruction had once been contemplated, and deemed unadvisable. That they did not look upon a chancel at all in the same light that those who built them did, may be inferred from the fact that "the table at communion time may stand in the body of the church, or in the chancel," leaving it optional; and Mr. Macaulay informs us that Bishop Ridley pulled down all the ancient altars in his diocese, and put up tables in the centre of the church.

Now let us put our table in the centre of the church; but then, say the clergy, we have not

> Our Christian altar faithful to the East,
> Whence the tall window drinks the morning rays.

The reasons for the orientation of churches as given by Wordsworth and old George Herbert, are poetical in the extreme, and no man reverences poetry more than I do, particularly when applied to sacred things; but the shifts to which modern church builders are often re-

* The following is an extract from a paper read at the Architectural Association on the 30th ult. We give it, as suggesting comment.

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